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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio Stations, Monday, May 25, 1936.

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Department of Agriculture

Hello folks: Last Monday in closing my talk to you I mentioned the fact that rose-leaf black-spot is making its appearance on roses in various parts of the country and that the plants should be sprayed or dusted to prevent injury from this disease. During the past week I have had several inquiries about the control of rose diseases and a number of you folks who listened to my suggestions last Monday have sent in specimens of the stems and leaves of roses which are being attacked by downy mildew, and in a few cases black-spot is also present. The majority of the specimens that I have received are of the variety of climbing rose known as Dorothy Perkins which is known to be very susceptible to the downy mildew.

Due to its tendency to mildew I have destroyed all of the Dorothy Perkins rose on my place with the exception of three or four plants that are growing in a hedge and which can not be dug out without destroying the hedge. Dusting the plants with dusting sulphur or thorough spraying with bordeaux mixture will go a long way toward preventing the mildew getting started but the dusting or spraying must be done before the disease appears in order to be effective.

Believing that many of you are interested in roses and have roses about your homes, I want to lay down a three-point program for growing good outdoor roses. These points consist of Pruning, Feeding, and Disease Control. Cultivation, watering, and insect control are also important but the three points I have mentioned--pruning, feeding and disease control--stand at the head of the list.

With regard to pruning, the main pruning of the bush roses should be done before they start in the spring. In many sections of the country the cold weather of last winter did most of the pruning, in fact many of the plants were killed outright while others were killed to within a few inches of the ground. It does not require much experience or training to be able to prune off all the dead wood and that was about what I did with my roses the past spring. Those roses are in full bloom now and it is time to start the summer pruning which consists of cutting out the weak and poor branches and heading back the flower stems to within two buds of the main stems or branches. In case you are cutting your roses with long stems, this will answer for most of the summer pruning, but if you are allowing the flowers to remain until the petals fall it will be necessary to go over the plants two or three times during the early summer and head back the stems to prevent the formation of a mass of growth that will not bear flowers. At least if you want later flowers having long stems you will have to prune rather heavily just following the early blooming period.

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Climbing roses require heavy pruning after they complete their early blooming period. As soon as the flowers are gone the greater part of the old wood is ready to be cut out, but I'd advise you to get you a pair of heavy leather gloves with gauntlets before you start in to prune your climbing roses. Don't make the mistake that I did and get a pair of gloves with leather palms but with the backs of the gloves made of canvas because I had about all the stickers in the backs of my hands when I was through pruning those thorny Dr. Van Fleet and Mary Wallace climbing roses. With most of the old wood removed the new shoots will have a chance to develop and as they attain considerable length they should be pinched back and tied to the supports.

Now our second point, feeding your roses, is just as important as the pruning but the two go hand in hand. There are at least three ways to get a good growth on your roses. First by working plenty of compost, bone meal, and chemical fertilizers into the soil to a depth of 14 to 18 inches before you plant your roses. Second, by the application of liquid manure during the growing season, and third, by the application of chemical fertilizers at frequent intervals. In the spring of the year before your roses start into growth give each plant at least a handful of bone meal and a half bushel of dairy barn compost. As soon as the plants get started give each plant a heaping teaspoonful of a good mixed commercial fertilizer. Sprinkle the fertilizer all around the plant but not close to the stem and then work the fertilizer into the soil and follow with a watering. Repeat this each month up to the middle of the summer, then discontinue the fertilizer applications so the wood will ripen before winter.

No matter how well you prune and fertilize your roses if you do not control the diseases, and often the insects, you are headed for failure. The leaf-spot is the most troublesome disease, especially in sections of the country where the atmosphere gets muggy and hot with a large amount of moisture in the air. Dusting the plants with dusting sulphur or spraying them with bordeaux mixture will protect your roses from this disease. Another disease, the downy mildew, is not so easily controlled, in fact some varieties of climbing roses such as the Dorothy Perkins, as I have already mentioned, is very subject to mildewing. I find that the main point is to keep your duster loaded and shoot the dust to the roses at any time you think there is a chance of any of the leaf and stem diseases getting started. If in addition to the things I have suggested you water and cultivate your roses regularly as needed you should have no trouble growing some real show roses.